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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

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"These are the young Hoggleston-ki-an-s are they?"

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THERE IS COMFORT AT PLUMSTEAD.

HENRY GRANTLY had written the following short letter to Mrs. Grantly when he made up his mind to pull down the auctioneer's bills. "DEAR MOTHER,—I have postponed the sale, not liking to refuse you anything. As far as I can see, I shall still be forced to leave Cosby Lodge, as I certainly shall do all I can to make Grace Crawley my wife. I say this that there may be no misunderstanding with my father. The auctioneer has promised to have the bills removed.

"Your affectionate son,

"HENRY GRANTLY."

This had been written by the major on the Friday before Mr. Walker had brought up to him the tidings of Mr. Toogood and Mrs. Arabin's solution of the Crawley difficulty; but it did not reach Plumstead till the following morning. Mrs. Grantly immediately took the good news about the sale to her husband,—not of course showing him the letter, being far too wise for that, and giving him credit for being too wise to ask for it. "Henry has arranged with the auctioneer," she said joyfully; "and the bills have been all pulled down."

"How do you know?"

"I've just heard from him. He has told me so. Come, my dear, let me have the pleasure of hearing you say that things shall be pleasant again between you and him. He has yielded."

"I don't see much yielding in it."

"He has done what you wanted. What more can he do?"

"I want him to come over here, and take an interest in things,

and not treat me as though I were nobody." Within an hour of this the major had arrived at Plumstead, laden with the story of Mrs. Arabin and the cheque, and of Mr. Crawley's innocence,—laden not only with such tidings as he had received from Mr. Walker, but also with further details, which he had received from Mr. Toogood. For he had come through Barchester, and had seen Mr. Toogood on his way. This was on the Saturday morning, and he had breakfasted with Mr. Toogood at "The Dragon of Wantly." Mr. Toogood had told him of his suspicions,—how the red-nosed man had been stopped, and had been summoned as a witness for Mr. Crawley's trial,—and how he was now under the surveillance of the police. Grantly had not cared very much about the red-nosed man, confining his present solicitude to the question whether Grace Crawley's father would certainly be shown to have been innocent of the theft. "There's not a doubt about it, major," said Mr. Toogood; "not a doubt on earth. But we'd better be a little quiet till your aunt comes home,—just a little quiet. She'll be here in a day or two, and I won't budge till she comes." In spite of his desire for quiescence Mr. Toogood consented to a revelation being at once made to the archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly. "And I'll tell you what, major; as soon as ever Mrs. Arabin is here, and has given us her own word to act on, you and I will go over to Hogglestock and astonish them. I should like to go myself, because, you see, Mrs. Crawley is my cousin, and we have taken a little trouble about this matter." To this the major assented; but he altogether declined to assist in Mr. Toogood's speculations respecting the unfortunate Dan Stringer. It was agreed between them that for the present no visit should be made to the palace, as it was thought that Mr. Thumble had better be allowed to do the Hogglestock duties on the next Sunday. As matters went, however, Mr. Thumble did not do so. He had paid his last visit to Hogglestock.

It may be as well to explain here that the unfortunate Mr. Snapper was constrained to go out to Hogglestock on the Sunday which was now approaching,—which fell out as follows. It might be all very well for Mr. Toogood to arrange that he would not tell this person or that person of the news which he had brought down from London; but as he had told various people in Silverbridge, as he had told Mr. Soames, and as he had told the police at Barchester, of course the tale found its way to the palace. Mr. Thumble heard it, and having come by this time thoroughly to hate Hogglestock and all that belonged to it, he pleaded to Mr. Snapper that this report afforded ample reason why he need not again visit that detestable parish. Mr. Snapper did not see it in the

same light. "You may be sure Mr. Crawley will not get into the pulpit after his resignation, Mr. Thumble," said he.

"His resignation means nothing," said Thumble.

"It means a great deal," said Snapper; "and the duties must be provided for."

"I won't provide for them," said Thumble; "and so you may tell the bishop." In these days Mr. Thumble was very angry with the bishop, for the bishop had not yet seen him since the death of Mrs. Proudie.

Mr. Snapper had no alternative but to go to the bishop. The bishop in these days was very mild to those whom he saw, given but to few words, and a little astray,—as though he had had one of his limbs cut off,—as Mr. Snapper expressed it to Mrs. Snapper. "I shouldn't wonder if he felt as though all his limbs were cut off," said Mrs. Snapper; "you must give him time, and he'll come round by-and-by." I am inclined to think that Mrs. Snapper's opinion of the bishop's feelings and condition was correct. In his difficulty respecting Hogglestock and Mr. Thumble Mr. Snapper went to the bishop, and spoke perhaps a little harshly of Mr. Thumble.

"I think, upon the whole, Snapper, that you had better go yourself," said the bishop.

"Do you think so, my lord?" said Snapper. "It will be inconvenient."

"Everything is inconvenient; but you'd better go. And look here, Snapper, if I were you, I wouldn't say anything out at Hogglestock about the cheque. We don't know what it may come to yet." Mr. Snapper, with a heavy heart, left his patron, not at all liking the task that was before him. But his wife encouraged him to be obedient. He was the owner of a one-horse carriage, and the work was not, therefore, so hard to him as it would have been and had been to poor Mr. Thumble. And, moreover, his wife promised to go with him. Mr. Snapper and Mrs. Snapper did go over to Hogglestock, and the duty was done. Mrs. Snapper spoke a word or two to Mrs. Crawley, and Mr. Snapper spoke a word or two to Mr. Crawley; but not a word was said about the new news as to Mr. Soames's cheque, which were now almost current in Barchester. Indeed, no whisper about it had as yet reached Hogglestock.

"One word with you, reverend sir," said Mr. Crawley to the chaplain, as the latter was coming out of the church, "as to the parish work, sir, during the week;—I should be glad if you would favour me with your opinion."

"About what, Mr. Crawley?"

"Whether you think that I may be allowed, without scandal, to visit the sick,—and to give instruction in the school."

"Surely;—surely, Mr. Crawley. Why not?"

"Mr. Thumble gave me to understand that the bishop was very urgent that I should interfere in no way in the ministrations of the parish. Twice did he enjoin on me that I should not interfere,—unnecessarily, as it seemed to me."

"Quite unnecessary," said Mr. Snapper. "And the bishop will be obliged to you, Mr. Crawley, if you'll just see that the things go on all straight."

"I wish it were possible to know with accuracy what his idea of straightness is," said Mr. Crawley to his wife. "It may be that things are straight to him when they are buried as it were out of sight, and put away without trouble. I hope it be not so with the bishop." When he went into his school and remembered,—as he did remember through every minute of his teaching—that he was to receive no portion of the poor stipend which was allotted for the clerical duties of the parish, he told himself that there was gross injustice in the way in which things were being made straight at Hogglestock.

But we must go back to the major and to the archdeacon at Plumstead,—in which comfortable parish things were generally made straight more easily than at Hogglestock. Henry Grantly went over from Barchester to Plumstead in a gig from the "Dragon," and made his way at once into his father's study. The archdeacon was seated there with sundry manuscripts before him, and with one half-finished manuscript,—as was his wont on every Saturday morning. "Halloo, Harry," he said. "I didn't expect you in the least." It was barely an hour since he had told Mrs. Grantly that his complaint against his son was that he wouldn't come and make himself comfortable at the rectory.

"Father," said he, giving the archdeacon his hand, "you have heard nothing yet about Mr. Crawley?"

"No," said the archdeacon jumping up; "nothing new;—what is it?" Many ideas about Mr. Crawley at that moment flitted across the archdeacon's mind. Could it be that the unfortunate man had committed suicide, overcome by his troubles?

"It has all come out. He got the cheque from my aunt."

"From your aunt Eleanor?"

"Yes; from my aunt Eleanor. She has telegraphed over from Venice to say that she gave the identical cheque to Crawley. That is

all we know at present,—except that she has written an account of the matter to you, and that she will be here herself as quick as she can come."

"Who got the message, Henry?"

"Crawley's lawyer,—a fellow named Toogood, a cousin of his wife's; —a very decent fellow," added the major, remembering how necessary it was that he should reconcile his father to all the Crawley belongings. "He's to be over here on Monday, and then will arrange what is to be done."

"Done in what way, Henry?"

"There's a great deal to be done yet. Crawley does not know himself at this moment how the cheque got into his hands. He must be told, and something must be settled about the living. They've taken the living away from him among them. And then the indictment must be quashed, or something of that kind done. Toogood has got hold of the scoundrel at Barchester who really stole the cheque from Soames; —or thinks that he has. It's that Dan Stringer."

"He's got hold of a regular scamp then. I never knew any good of Dan Stringer," said the archdeacon.

Then Mrs. Grantly was told, and the whole story was repeated again, with many expressions of commiseration in reference to all the Crawleys. The archdeacon did not join in these at first, being rather shy on that head. It was very hard for him to have to speak to his son about the Crawleys as though they were people in all respects estimable and well-conducted, and satisfactory. Mrs. Grantly understood this so well, that every now and then she said some half-laughing word respecting Mr. Crawley's peculiarities, feeling that in this way she might ease her husband's difficulties. "He must be the oddest man that ever lived," said Mrs. Grantly, "not to have known where he got the cheque." The archdeacon shook his head, and rubbed his hands as he walked about the room. "I suppose too much learning has upset him," said the archdeacon. "They say he's not very good at talking English, but put him on in Greek and he never stops."

The archdeacon was perfectly aware that he had to admit Mr. Crawley to his goodwill, and that as for Grace Crawley,—it was essentially necessary that she should be admitted to his heart of hearts. He had promised as much. It must be acknowledged that Archdeacon Grantly always kept his promises, and especially such promises as these. And indeed it was the nature of the man that when he had been very angry with those he loved, he should be unhappy until he had found some escape from his anger. He could not endure to have to own himself to have been in the wrong, but he could be content with a very

incomplete recognition of his having been in the right. The posters had been pulled down and Mr. Crawley, as he was now told, had not stolen the cheque. That was sufficient. If his son would only drink a glass or two of wine with him comfortably, and talk dutifully about the Plumstead foxes, all should be held to be right, and Grace Crawley should be received with lavish paternal embraces. The archdeacon had kissed Grace once, and felt that he could do so again without an unpleasant strain upon his feelings.

"Say something to your father about the property after dinner," said Mrs. Grantly to her son when they were alone together.

"About what property?"

"About this property, or any property; you know what I mean; —something to show that you are interested about his affairs. He is doing the best he can to make things right." After dinner, over the claret, Mr. Thorne's terrible sin in reference to the trapping of foxes was accordingly again brought up, and the archdeacon became beautifully irate, and expressed his animosity,—which he did not in the least feel,—against an old friend with an energy which would have delighted his wife, if she could have heard him. "I shall tell Thorne my mind, certainly. He and I are very old friends; we have known each other all our lives; but I cannot put up with this kind of thing,—and I will not. It's all because he's afraid of his own gamekeeper." And yet the archdeacon had never ridden after a fox in his life, and never meant to do so. Nor had he in truth been always so very anxious that foxes should be found in his covers. That fox which had been so fortunately trapped just outside the Plumstead property afforded a most pleasant escape for the steam of his anger. When he began to talk to his wife that evening about Mr. Thorne's wicked gamekeeper, she was so sure that all was right, that she said a word of her extreme desire to see Grace Crawley.

"If he is to marry her, we might as well have her over here," said the archdeacon.

"That's just what I was thinking," said Mrs. Grantly. And thus things at the rectory got themselves arranged.

On the Sunday morning the expected letter from Venice came to hand, and was read on that morning very anxiously, not only by Mrs. Grantly and the major, but by the archdeacon also, in spite of the sanctity of the day. Indeed the archdeacon had been very stoutly anti-sabbatarial when the question of stopping the Sunday post to Plumstead had been mooted in the village, giving those who on that occasion were the special friends of the postman to understand that he

considered them to be numskulls, and little better than idiots. The postman, finding the parson to be against him, had seen that there was no chance for him, and had allowed the matter to drop. Mrs. Arabin's letter was long and eager, and full of repetitions, but it did explain clearly to them the exact manner in which the cheque had found its way into Mr. Crawley's hand. "Francis came up to me," she said in her letter,—Francis being her husband, the dean,—"and asked me for the money, which I had promised to make up in a packet. The packet was not ready, and he would not wait, declaring that Mr. Crawley was in such a flurry that he did not like to leave him. I was therefore to bring it down to the door. I went to my desk, and thinking that I could spare the twenty pounds as well as the fifty, I put the cheque into the envelope, together with the notes, and handed the packet to Francis at the door. I think I told Francis afterwards that I put seventy pounds into the envelope, instead of fifty, but of this I will not be sure. *At any rate, Mr. Crawley got Mr. Soames's cheque from me.*" These last words she underscored, and then went on to explain how the cheque had been paid to her a short time before by Dan Stringer.

"Then Toogood has been right about the fellow," said the archdeacon.

"I hope they'll hang him," said Mrs. Grantly. "He must have known all the time what dreadful misery he was bringing upon this unfortunate family."

"I don't suppose Dan Stringer cared much about that," said the major.

"Not a straw," said the archdeacon, and then all hurried off to church; and the archdeacon preached the sermon in the fabrication of which he had been interrupted by his son, and which therefore barely enabled him to turn the quarter of an hour from the giving out of his text. It was his constant practice to preach for full twenty minutes.

As Barchester lay on the direct road from Plumstead to Hogglestock, it was thought well that word should be sent to Mr. Toogood, desiring him not to come out to Plumstead on the Monday morning. Major Grantly proposed to call for him at "The Dragon," and to take him on from thence to Hogglestock. "You had better take your mother's horses all through," said the archdeacon. The distance was very nearly twenty miles, and it was felt both by the mother and the son, that the archdeacon must be in a good humour when he made such a proposition as that. It was not often that the rectory carriage-horses were allowed to make long journeys. A run into Barchester and back, which

altogether was under ten miles, was generally the extent of their work. "I meant to have posted from Barchester," said the major. "You may as well take the horses through," said the archdeacon. "Your mother will not want them. And I suppose you might as well bring your friend Toogood back to dinner. We'll give him a bed."

"He must be a good sort of man," said Mrs. Grantly; "for I suppose he has done all this for love?"

"Yes; and spent a lot of money out of his own pocket too!" said the major enthusiastically. "And the joke of it is, that he has been defending Crawley in Crawley's teeth. Mr. Crawley had refused to employ counsel; but Toogood had made up his mind to have a barrister, on purpose that there might be a fuss about it in court. He thought that it would tell with the jury in Crawley's favour."

"Bring him here, and we'll hear all about that from himself," said the archdeacon. The major, before he started, told his mother that he should call at Framley Parsonage on his way back; but he said nothing on this subject to his father.

"I'll write to her in a day or two," said Mrs. Grantly, "and we'll have things settled pleasantly."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE CRAWLEYS ARE INFORMED.

Major Grantly made an early start, knowing that he had a long day's work before him. He had written over-night to Mr. Toogood, naming the hour at which he would reach "The Dragon," and was there punctual to the moment. When the attorney came out and got into the open carriage, while the groom held the steps for him, it was plain to be seen that the respect in which he was held at "The Dragon" was greatly increased. It was already known that he was going to Plumstead that night, and it was partly understood that he was engaged with the Grantly and Arabin faction in defending Mr. Crawley the clergyman against the Proudie faction. Dan Stringer, who was still at the inn, as he saw his enemy get into the Plumstead carriage, felt himself to be one of the palace party, and felt that if Mrs. Proudie had only lived till after the assizes all this heavy trouble would not have befallen him. The waiter with the dirty napkin stood at the door and bowed, thinking perhaps that as the Proudie party was going down in Barchester, it might be as well to be civil to Mr. Toogood. The days of the Stringers

were probably drawing to a close at "The Dragon of Wantly," and there was no knowing who might be the new landlord.

Henry Grantly and the lawyer found very little to say to each other on their long way out to Hogglestock. They were thinking, probably, much of the coming interview, and hardly knew how to express their thoughts to each other. "I will not take the carriage up to the house," said the major, as they were entering the parish of Hogglestock; "particularly as the man must feed the horses." So they got out at a farmhouse about half a mile from the church, where the offence of the carriage and livery-servant would be well out of Mr. Crawley's sight, and from thence walked towards the parsonage. The church, and the school close to it, lay on their way, and as they passed by the school door they heard voices within. "I'll bet twopence he's there," said Toogood. "They tell me he's always either in one shop or the other. I'll slip in and bring him out." Mr. Toogood had assumed a comfortable air, as though the day's work was to be good pastime, and even made occasional attempts at drollery. He had had his jokes about Dan Stringer, and had attempted to describe the absurdities of Mr. Crawley's visit to Bedford Row. All this would have angered the major, had he not seen that it was assumed to cover something below of which Mr. Toogood was a little ashamed, but of which, as the major thought, Mr. Toogood had no cause to be ashamed. When, therefore, Toogood proposed to go into the school and bring Mr. Crawley out, as though the telling of their story would be the easiest thing in the world, the major did not stop him. Indeed he had no plan of his own ready. His mind was too intent on the tragedy which had occurred, and which was now to be brought to a close, to enable him to form any plan as to the best way of getting up the last scene. So Mr. Toogood, with quick and easy steps, entered the school, leaving the major still standing in the road. Mr. Crawley was in the school;—as was also Jane Crawley. "So here you are," said Toogood. "That's fortunate. I hope I find you pretty well?"

"If I am not mistaken in the identity, my wife's relative, Mr. Toogood?" said Mr. Crawley, stepping down from his humble desk.

"Just so, my friend," said Toogood, with his hand extended, "just so; and there's another gentleman outside who wants to have a word with you also. Perhaps you won't mind stepping out. These are the young Hogglestockians; are they?"

The young Hogglestockians stared at him, and so did Jane. Jane, who had before heard of him, did not like him at first sight, seeing that her father was clearly displeased by the tone of the visitor's address.

Mr. Crawley was displeased. There was a familiarity about Mr. Toogood which made him sore, as having been exhibited before his pupils. "If you will be pleased to step out, sir, I will follow you," he said, waving his hand towards the door. "Jane, my dear, if you will remain with the children, I will return to you presently. Bobby Studge has failed in saying his Belief. You had better set him on again from the beginning. Now, Mr. Toogood." And again he waved with his hand towards the door.

"So that's my young cousin, is it?" said Toogood, stretching over and just managing to touch Jane's fingers,—of which act of touching Jane was very chary. Then he went forth, and Mr. Crawley followed him. There was the major standing in the road, and Toogood was anxious to be the first to communicate the good news. It was the only reward he had proposed to himself for the money he had expended and the time he had lost and the trouble he had taken. "It's all right, old fellow," he said, clapping his hand on Crawley's shoulder. "We've got the right sow by the ear at last. We know all about it." Mr. Crawley could hardly remember the time when he had been called an old fellow last, and now he did not like it; nor, in the confusion of his mind, could he understand the allusion to the right sow. He supposed that Mr. Crawley had come to him about his trial, but it did not occur to him that the lawyer might be bringing him news which might make the trial altogether unnecessary. "If my eyes are not mistaken, there is my friend, Major Grantly," said Mr. Crawley.

"There he is, as large as life," said Toogood. "But stop a moment before you go to him, and give me your hand. I must have the first shake of it." Hereupon Crawley extended his hand. "That's right. And now let me tell you we know all about the cheque,—Soames's cheque. We know where you got it. We know who stole it. We know how it came to the person who gave it to you. It's all very well talking, but when you're in trouble always go to a lawyer."

By this time Mr. Crawley was looking full into Mr. Toogood's face, and seeing that his cousin's eyes were streaming with tears, began to get some insight into the man's character, and also some very dim insight into the facts which the man intended to communicate to himself. "I do not as yet fully understand you, sir," said he, "being perhaps in such matters somewhat dull of intellect, but it seemeth to me that you are a messenger of glad tidings, whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains."

"Beautiful!" said Toogood. "By George, I should think they are beautiful! Don't you hear me tell you that we have found out all

about the cheque, and that you're as right as a trivet?" They were still on the little causeway leading from the school up to the road, and Henry Grantly was waiting for them at the small wicket-gate. "Mr. Crawley," said the major, "I congratulate you with all my heart. I could not but accompany my friend, Mr. Toogood, when he brought you this good news."

"I do not even yet altogether comprehend what has been told to me," said Crawley, now standing out on the road between the other two men. "I am doubtless dull,—very dull. May I beg some clearer word of explanation before I ask you to go with me to my wife?"

"The cheque was given to you by my aunt Eleanor."

"Your aunt Eleanor!" said Crawley, now altogether in the clouds. Who was the major's aunt Eleanor? Though he had, no doubt, at different times heard all the circumstances of the connection, he had never realized the fact that his daughter's lover was the nephew of his old friend, Arabin.

"Yes; by my aunt, Mrs. Arabin."

"She put it into the envelope with the notes," said Toogood;—"slipped it in without saying a word to any one. I never heard of a woman doing such a mad thing in my life before. If she had died, or if we hadn't caught her, where should we all have been? Not but what I think I should have run Dan Stringer to ground too, and worked it out of him."

"Then, after all, it was given to me by the dean?" said Crawley, drawing himself up.

"It was in the envelope, but the dean did not know it," said the major.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Crawley, "I was sure of it. I knew it. Weak as my mind may be,—and at times it is very weak,—I was certain that I could not have erred in such a matter. The more I struggled with my memory, the more fixed with me became the fact,—which I had forgotten but for a moment,—that the document had formed a part of that small packet handed to me by the dean. But look you, sirs,—bear with me yet for a moment. I said that it was so, and the dean denied it."

"The dean did not know it, man," said Toogood, almost in a passion.

"Bear with me yet awhile. So far have I been from misdoubting the dean,—whom I have long known to be in all things a true and honest gentleman,—that I postponed the elaborated result of my own memory to his word. And I felt myself the more constrained to do

this, because, in a moment of forgetfulness, in the wantonness of inconsiderate haste, with wicked thoughtlessness, I had allowed myself to make a false statement,—unwittingly false, indeed, nathless very false, unpardonably false. I had declared, without thinking, that the money had come to me from the hands of Mr. Soames, thereby seeming to cast a reflection upon that gentleman. When I had been guilty of so great a blunder, of so gross a violation of that ordinary care which should govern all words between man and man, especially when any question of money may be in doubt,—how could I expect that any one should accept my statement when contravened by that made by the dean? How, in such an embarrassment, could I believe my own memory? Gentlemen, I did not believe my own memory. Though all the little circumstances of that envelope, with its rich but perilous freightage, came back upon me from time to time with an exactness that has appeared to me to be almost marvellous, yet I have told myself that it was not so! Gentlemen, if you please, we will go into the house; my wife is there, and should no longer be left in suspense." They passed on in silence for a few steps, till Crawley spoke again. "Perhaps you will allow me the privilege to be alone with her for one minute,—but for a minute. Her thanks shall not be delayed, where thanks are so richly due."

"Of course," said Toogood, wiping his eyes with a large red bandana handkerchief. "By all means. We'll take a little walk. Come along, major." The major had turned his face away, and he also was weeping. "By George! I never heard such a thing in all my life," said Toogood. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. I wouldn't, indeed. If I were to tell that up in London, nobody would believe me."

"I call that man a hero," said Grantly.

"I don't know about being a hero. I never quite knew what makes a hero, if it isn't having three or four girls dying in love for you at once. But to find a man who was going to let everything in the world go against him, because he believed another fellow better than himself! There's many a chap thinks another man is wool-gathering; but this man has thought he was wool-gathering himself! It's not natural; and the world wouldn't go on if there were many like that. He's beckoning, and we had better go in."

Mr. Toogood went first, and the major followed him. When they entered the front door they saw the skirt of a woman's dress flitting away through the door at the end of the passage, and on entering the room to the left they found Mr. Crawley alone. "She has fled, as

though from an enemy," he said, with a little attempt at a laugh; "but I will pursue her, and bring her back."

"No, Crawley, no," said the lawyer. "She's a little upset, and all that kind of thing. We know what women are. Let her alone."

"Nay, Mr. Toogood; but then she would be angered with herself afterwards, and would lack the comfort of having spoken a word of gratitude. Pardon me, Major Grantly; but I would not have you leave us till she has seen you. It is as her cousin says. She is somewhat over-excited. But still it will be best that she should see you. Gentlemen, you will excuse me."

Then he went out to fetch his wife, and while he was away not a word was spoken. The major looked out of one window and Mr. Toogood out of the other, and they waited patiently till they heard the coming steps of the husband and wife. When the door was opened, Mr. Crawley appeared, leading his wife by the hand. "My dear," he said, "you know Major Grantly. This is your cousin, Mr. Toogood. It is well that you know him too, and remember his great kindness to us." But Mrs. Crawley could not speak. She could only sink on the sofa, and hide her face, while she strove in vain to repress her sobs. She had been very strong through all her husband's troubles,—very strong in bearing for him what he could not bear for himself, and in fighting on his behalf battles in which he was altogether unable to couch a lance; but the endurance of so many troubles, and the great overwhelming sorrow at last, had so nearly overpowered her, that she could not sustain the shock of this turn in their fortunes. "She was never like this, sirs, when ill news came to us," said Mr. Crawley, standing somewhat apart from her.

The major sat himself by her side, and put his hand upon hers, and whispered some word to her about her daughter. Upon this she threw her arms around him, and kissed his face, and then his hands, and then looked up into his face through her tears. She murmured some few words, or attempted to do so. I doubt whether the major understood their meaning, but he knew very well what was in her heart.

"And now I think we might as well be moving," said Mr. Toogood. "I'll see about having the indictment quashed. I'll arrange all that with Walker. It may be necessary that you should go into Barchester the first day the judges sit; and if so, I'll come and fetch you. You may be sure I won't leave the place till it's all square."

As they were going, Grantly, — speaking now altogether with indifference as to Toogood's presence,—asked Mr. Crawley's leave to be the bearer of these tidings to his daughter.

"She can hear it in no tones that can be more grateful to her," said Mr. Crawley.

"I shall ask her for nothing for myself now," said Grantly. "It would be ungenerous. But hereafter,—in a few days,—when she shall be more at ease, may I then use your permission——?"

"Major Grantly," said Mr. Crawley, solemnly, "I respect you so highly, and esteem you so thoroughly, that I give willingly that which you ask. If my daughter can bring herself to regard you, as a woman should regard her husband, with the love that can worship and cling and be constant, she will, I think, have a fair promise of worldly happiness. And for you, sir, in giving to you my girl,—if so it be that she is given to you,—I shall bestow upon you a great treasure." Had Grace been a king's daughter, with a queen's dowry, the permission to address her could not have been imparted to her lover with a more thorough appreciation of the value of the privilege conferred.

"He is a rum 'un," said Mr. Toogood, as they got into the carriage together; "but they say he's a very good 'un to go."

After their departure Jane was sent for, that she might hear the family news; and when she expressed some feeling not altogether in favour of Mr. Toogood, Mr. Crawley thus strove to correct her views. "He is a man, my dear, who conceals a warm heart, and an active spirit, and healthy sympathies, under an affected jocularity of manner, and almost with a touch of assumed vulgarity. But when the jewel itself is good, any fault in the casket may be forgiven."

"Then, papa, the next time I see him I'll like him,—if I can," said Jane.

The village of Framley lies slightly off the road from Hogglestock to Barchester,—so much so as to add perhaps a mile to the journey if the traveller goes by the parsonage gate. On their route to Hogglestock our two travellers had passed Framley without visiting the village, but on the return journey the major asked Mr. Toogood's permission to make the deviation. "I'm not in a hurry," said Toogood. "I never was more comfortable in my life. I'll just light a cigar while you go in and see your friends." Toogood lit his cigar, and the major, getting down from the carriage, entered the parsonage. It was his fortune to find Grace alone. Robarts was in Barchester, and Mrs. Robarts was across the road, at Lufton Court. "Miss Crawley was certainly in," the servant told him, and he soon found himself in Miss Crawley's presence.

"I have only called to tell you the news about your father," said he.

"What news?"

"We have just come from Hogglestock,—your cousin, Mr. Toogood, that is, and myself. They have found out all about the cheque. My aunt, Mrs. Arabin, the dean's wife, you know,—she gave it to your father."

"Oh, Major Grantly!"

"It seems so easily settled, does it not?"

"And is it settled?"

"Yes; everything. Everything about that." Now he had hold of her hand as if he were going. "Good-by. I told your father that I would just call and tell you."

"It seems almost more than I can believe."

"You may believe it; indeed you may." He still held her hand. "You will write to your mother I daresay to-night. Tell her I was here. Good-by now."

"Good-by," she said. Her hand was still in his, as she looked up into his face.

"Dear, dear, dearest Grace! My darling Grace!" Then he took her into his arms and kissed her, and went his way without another word, feeling that he had kept his word to her father like a gentleman. Grace, when she was left alone, thought that she was the happiest girl in Christendom. If she could only get to her mother, and tell everything, and be told everything! She had no idea of any promise that her lover might have made to her father, nor did she make inquiry of her own thoughts as to his reasons for staying with her so short a time; but looking back at it all she thought his conduct had been perfect.

In the meantime the major, with Mr. Toogood, was driven home to dinner at Barchester.

CHAPTER LXXV.

MADALINA'S HEART IS BLEEDING.

John Eames, as soon as he had left Mrs. Arabin at the hotel and had taken his travelling-bag to his own lodgings, started off for his uncle Toogood's house. There he found Mrs. Toogood, not in the most serene state of mind as to her husband's absence. Mr. Toogood had now been at Barchester for the best part of a week,—spending a good deal of money at the inn. Mrs. Toogood was quite sure that he must be doing that. Indeed, how could he help himself? Johnny remarked that he did not see how in such circumstances his uncle was to help himself. And then Mr. Toogood had only written one short scrap of a letter,—just three words, and they were written in triumph. "Crawley is all right, and I think I've got the real Simon Pure by the heels." "It's all very well, John," Mrs. Toogood said; "and of course it would be a terrible thing to the family if anybody connected with it were made out to be a thief." "It would be quite dreadful," said Johnny. "Not that I ever looked upon the Crawleys as connections of ours. But, however, let that pass. I'm sure I'm very glad that your uncle should have been able to be of service to them. But there's reason in the roasting of eggs, and I can tell you that money is not so plenty in this house, that your uncle can afford to throw it into the Barchester gutters. Think what twelve children are, John. It might be all very well if Toogood were a bachelor, and if some lord had left him a fortune." John Eames did not stay very long in Tavistock Square. His cousins Polly and Lucy were gone to the play with Mr. Summerkin, and his aunt was not in one of her best humours. He took his uncle's part as well as he could, and then left Mrs. Toogood. The little allusion to Lord De Guest's generosity had not been pleasant to him. It seemed to rob him of all his own merit. He had been rather proud of his journey to Italy, having contrived to spend nearly forty pounds in ten days. He had done everything in the most expensive way, feeling that every napoleon wasted had been laid out on behalf of Mr. Crawley. But, as Mrs. Toogood had just told him, all this was nothing to what Toogood was doing. Toogood with twelve children was living at his own charges at Barchester, and was neglecting his business besides. "There's Mr. Crump," said Mrs. Toogood. "Of course he doesn't

like it, and what can I say to him when he comes to me?" This was not quite fair on the part of Mrs. Toogood, as Mr. Crump had not troubled her even once as yet since her husband's departure.

What was Johnny to do, when he left Tavistock Square? His club was open to him. Should he go to his club, play a game of billiards, and have some supper? When he asked himself the question he knew that he would not go to his club, and yet he pretended to doubt about it, as he made his way to a cabstand in Tottenham Court Road. It would be slow, he told himself, to go to his club. He would have gone to see Lily Dale, only that his intimacy with Mrs. Thorne was not sufficient to justify his calling at her house between nine and ten o'clock at night. But, as he must go somewhere,—and as his intimacy with Lady Demolines was, he thought, sufficient to justify almost anything,—he would go to Bayswater. I regret to say that he had written a mysterious note from Paris to Madalina Demolines, saying that he should be in London on this very night, and that it was just on the cards that he might make his way up to Porchester Terrace before he went to bed. The note was mysterious, because it had neither beginning nor ending. It did not contain even initials. It was written like a telegraph message, and was about as long. It was the kind of thing Miss Demolines liked, Johnny thought; and there could be no reason why he should not gratify her. It was her favourite game. Some people like whist, some like croquet, and some like intrigue. Madalina would probably have called it romance,—because by nature she was romantic. John, who was made of sterner stuff, laughed at this. He knew that there was no romance in it. He knew that he was only amusing himself, and gratifying her at the same time, by a little innocent pretence. He told himself that it was his nature to prefer the society of women to that of men. He would have liked the society of Lily Dale, no doubt, much better than that of Miss Demolines; but as the society of Lily Dale was not to be had at that moment, the society of Miss Demolines was the best substitute within his reach. So he got into a cab and had himself driven to Porchester Terrace. "Is Lady Demolines at home?" he said to the servant. He always asked for Lady Demolines. But the page who was accustomed to open the door for him was less false, being young, and would now tell him, without any further fiction, that Miss Madalina was in the drawing-room. Such was the answer he got from the page on this evening. What Madalina did with her mother on these occasions he had never yet discovered. There used to be some little excuses given about Lady Demolines' state of health, but latterly Madalina had dis-

continued her references to her mother's headaches. She was standing in the centre of the drawing-room when he entered it, with both her hands raised, and an almost terrible expression of mystery in her face. Her hair, however, had been very carefully arranged so as to fall with copious carelessness down her shoulders, and altogether she was looking her best. "Oh, John," she said. She called him John by accident in the tumult of the moment. "Have you heard what has happened? But of course you have heard it."

"Heard what? I have heard nothing," said Johnny, arrested almost in the doorway by the nature of the question,—and partly also, no doubt, by the tumult of the moment. He had no idea how terrible a tragedy was in truth in store for him; but he perceived that the moment was to be tumultuous, and that he must carry himself accordingly.

"Come in, and close the door," she said. He came in and closed the door. "Do you mean to say that you haven't heard what has happened in Hook Court?"

"No;—what has happened in Hook Court?" Miss Demolines threw herself back into an arm-chair, closed her eyes, and clasped both her hands upon her forehead. "What has happened in Hook Court?" said Johnny, walking up to her.

"I do not think I can bring myself to tell you," she answered.

Then he took one of her hands down from her forehead and held it in his,—which she allowed passively. She was thinking, no doubt, of something far different from that.

"I never saw you looking better in my life," said Johnny.

"Don't," said she. "How can you talk in that way, when my heart is bleeding,—bleeding." Then she pulled away her hand, and again clasped it with the other upon her forehead.

"But why is your heart bleeding? What has happened in Hook Court?" Still she answered nothing, but she sobbed violently and the heaving of her bosom showed how tumultuous was the tumult within it. "You don't mean to say that Dobbs Broughton has come to grief;—that he's to be sold out?"

"Man," said Madalina, jumping from her chair, standing at her full height, and stretching out both her arms, "he has destroyed himself!" The revelation was at last made with so much tragic propriety, in so excellent a tone, and with such an absence of all the customary redundances of commonplace relation, that I think that she must have rehearsed the scene,—either with her mother or with the page. Then there was a minute's silence, during which she did not move even an

eyelid. She held her outstretched hands without dropping a finger half an inch. Her face was thrust forward, her chin projecting, with tragic horror; but there was no vacillation even in her chin. She did not wink an eye, or alter to the breadth of a hair the aperture of her lips. Surely she was a great genius if she did it all without previous rehearsal. Then, before he had thought of words in which to answer her, she let her hands fall by her side, she closed her eyes, and shook her head, and fell back again into her chair. "It is too horrible to be spoken of,—to be thought about," she said. "I could not have brought myself to tell the tale to a living being,—except to you."

This would naturally have been flattering to Johnny had it not been that he was in truth absorbed by the story which he had heard.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that Broughton has——committed suicide?" She could not speak of it again, but nodded her head at him thrice, while her eyes were still closed. "And how was the manner of it?" said he, asking the question in a low voice. He could not even as yet quite bring himself to believe it. Madalina was so fond of a little playful intrigue, that even this story might have something in it of the nature of fiction. He was not quite sure of the facts, and yet he was shocked by what he had heard.

"Would you have me repeat to you all the bloody details of that terrible scene?" she said. "It is impossible. Go to your friend Dalrymple. He will tell you. He knows it all. He has been with Maria all through. I wish,—I wish it had not been so." But nevertheless she did bring herself to narrate all the details with something more of circumstance than Eames desired. She soon succeeded in making him understand that the tragedy of Hook Court was a reality, and that poor Dobbs Broughton had brought his career to an untimely end. She had heard everything,—having indeed gone to Musselboro in the City, and having penetrated even to the sanctum of Mr. Bangles. To Mr. Bangles she had explained that she was bosom-friend of the widow of the unfortunate man, and that it was her miserable duty to make herself the mistress of all the circumstances. Mr. Bangles,—the reader may remember him, Burton and Bangles, who kept the stores for Himalaya wines at 22*s.* 6*d.* the dozen, in Hook Court,—was a bachelor, and rather liked the visit, and told Miss Demolines very freely all he had seen. And when she suggested that it might be expedient for the sake of the family that she should come back to Mr. Bangles for further information at a subsequent period, he very politely assured her that she would "do him proud," whenever she might please to call in Hook Court. And then he saw her into Lombard Street, and put

her into an omnibus. She was therefore well qualified to tell Johnny all the particulars of the tragedy,—and she did so far overcome her horror as to tell them all. She told her tale somewhat after the manner of Æneas, not forgetting "the quorum pars magna fui." "I feel that it almost makes an old woman of me," said she, when she had finished.

"No," said Johnny, remonstrating;—"not that."

"But it does. To have been concerned in so terrible a tragedy takes more of life out of one than years of tranquil existence." As she had told him nothing of her intercourse with Bangles,—with Bangles who had literally picked the poor wretch up,—he did not see how she herself had been concerned in the matter; but he said nothing about that, knowing the character of his Madalina. "I shall see—that—body, floating before my eyes while I live," she said, "and the gory wound, and,—and——" "Don't," said Johnny, recoiling in truth from the picture, by which he was revolted. "Never again," she said; "never again! But you forced it from me, and now I shall not close my eyes for a week."

She then became very comfortably confidential, and discussed the affairs of poor Mrs. Dobbs Broughton with a great deal of satisfaction. "I went to see her, of course, but she sent me down word to say that the shock would be too much for her. I do not wonder that she should not see me. Poor Maria! She came to me for advice, you know, when Dobbs Broughton first proposed to her; and I was obliged to tell her what I really thought. I knew her character so well! 'Dear Maria,' I said, 'if you think that you can love him, take him!' 'I think I can,' she replied. 'But,' said I, 'make yourself quite sure about the business.' And how has it turned out? She never loved him. What heart she has she has given to that wretched Dalrymple."

"I don't see that he is particularly wretched," said Johnny, pleading for his friend.

"He is wretched, and so you'll find. She gave him her heart after giving her hand to poor Dobbs; and as for the business, there isn't as much left as will pay for her mourning. I don't wonder that she could not bring herself to see me."

"And what has become of the business?"

"It belongs to Mrs. Van Siever,—to her and Musselboro. Poor Broughton had some little money, and it has gone among them. Musselboro, who never had a penny, will be a rich man. Of course you know that he is going to marry Clara?"

"Nonsense!"

"I always told you that it would be so. And now you may perhaps

acknowledge that Conway Dalrymple's prospects are not very brilliant. I hope he likes being cut out by Mr. Musselboro! Of course he will have to marry Maria. I do not see how he can escape. Indeed, she is too good for him;—only after such a marriage as that, there would be an end to all his prospects as an artist. The best thing for them would be to go to New Zealand."

John Eames certainly liked these evenings with Miss Demolines. He sat at his ease in a comfortable chair, and amused himself by watching her different little plots. And then she had bright eyes, and she flattered him, and allowed him to scold her occasionally. And now and again there might be some more potent attraction, when she would admit him to take her hand,—or the like. It was better than to sit smoking with men at the club. But he could not sit all night even with Madalina Demolines, and at eleven he got up to take his leave. "When shall you see Miss Dale?" she asked him suddenly.

"I do not know," he answered, frowning at her. He always frowned at her when she spoke to him of Miss Dale.

"I do not in the least care for your frowns," she said playfully, putting up her hands to smooth his brows. "I think I know you intimately enough to name your goddess to you."

"She isn't my goddess."

"A very cold goddess, I should think, from what I hear. I wish to ask you for a promise respecting her."

"What promise?"

"Will you grant it me?"

"How can I tell till I hear?"

"You must promise me not to speak of me to her when you see her."

"But why must I promise that?"

"Promise me."

"Not unless you tell me why." Johnny had already assured himself that nothing could be more improbable than that he should mention the name of Miss Demolines to Lily Dale.

"Very well, sir. Then you may go. And I must say that unless you can comply with so slight a request as that, I shall not care to see you here again. Mr. Eames, why should you want to speak evil of me to Miss Dale?"

"I do not want to speak evil of you."

"I know that you could not speak of me to her without at least ridicule. Come, promise me. You shall come here on Thursday evening, and I will tell you why I have asked you."

"Tell me now."

She hesitated a moment, and then shook her head. "No. I cannot tell you now. My heart is still bleeding with the memory of that poor man's fate. I will not tell you now. And yet it is now that you must give me the promise. Will you not trust me so far as that?"

"I will not speak of you to Miss Dale."

"There is my own friend! And now, John, mind you are here at half-past eight on Thursday. Punctually at half-past eight. There is a thing I have to tell you, which I will tell you then if you will come. I had thought to have told you to-day."

"And why not now?"

"I cannot. My feelings are too many for me. I should never go through with it after all that has passed between us about poor Broughton. I should break down; indeed I should. Go now, for I am tired." Then, having probably taken a momentary advantage of that more potent attraction to which we have before alluded, he left the room very suddenly.

He left the room very suddenly because Madalina's movements had been so sudden, and her words so full of impulse. He had become aware that in this little game which he was playing in Porchester Terrace everything ought to be done after some unaccustomed and special fashion. So,—having clasped Madalina for one moment in his arms,—he made a rush at the room door, and was out on the landing in a second. He was a little too quick for old Lady Demolines, the skirt of whose night-dress,—as it seemed to Johnny,—he saw whisking away, in at another door. It was nothing, however, to him if old Lady Demolines, who was always too ill to be seen, chose to roam about her own house in her night-dress.

When he found himself alone in the street, his mind reverted to Dobbs Broughton and the fate of the wretched man, and he sauntered slowly down Palace Gardens, that he might look at the house in which he had dined with a man who had destroyed himself by his own hands. He stood for a moment looking up at the windows, in which there was now no light, thinking of the poor woman whom he had seen in the midst of luxury, and who was now left a widow in such miserable circumstances! As for the suggestion that his friend Conway would marry her, he did not believe it for a moment. He knew too well what the suggestions of his Madalina were worth, and the motives from which they sprung. But he thought it might be true that Mrs. Van Siever had absorbed all there was of property, and possibly, also, that Musselboro was to marry her daughter. At any rate, he would go to Dalrymple's rooms, and if he could find him, would learn the truth.

He knew enough of Dalrymple's ways of life, and of the ways of his friend's chambers and studio, to care nothing for the lateness of the hour, and in a very few minutes he was sitting in Dalrymple's arm-chair. He found Siph Dunn there, smoking in unperturbed tranquillity, and as long as that lasted he could ask no questions about Mrs. Broughton. He told them, therefore, of his adventures abroad, and of Crawley's escape. But at last, having finished his third pipe, Siph Dunn took his leave.

"Tell me," said John, as soon as Dunn had closed the door, "what is this I hear about Dobbs Broughton?"

"He has blown his brains out. That is all."

"How terribly shocking!"

"Yes; it shocked us all at first. We are used to it now."

"And the business?"

"That had gone to the dogs. They say at least that his share of it had done so."

"And he was ruined?"

"They say so. That is, Musselboro says so, and Mrs. Van Siever."

"And what do you say, Conway?"

"The less I say the better. I have my hopes,—only you're such a talkative fellow, one can't trust you."

"I never told any secret of yours, old fellow."

"Well;—the fact is, I have an idea that something may be saved for the poor woman. I think that they are wronging her. Of course all I can do is to put the matter into a lawyer's hands, and pay the lawyer's bill. So I went to your cousin, and he has taken the case up. I hope he won't ruin me."

"Then I suppose you are quarrelling with Mrs. Van?"

"That doesn't matter. She has quarrelled with me."

"And what about Jael, Conway? They tell me that Jael is going to become Mrs. Musselboro."

"Who has told you that?"

"A bird."

"Yes; I know who the bird is. I don't think that Jael will become Mrs. Musselboro. I don't think that Jael would become Mrs. Musselboro, if Jael were the only woman, and Musselboro the only man in London. To tell you a little bit of secret, Johnny, I think that Jael will become the wife of one Conway Dalrymple. That is my opinion; and as far as I can judge, it is the opinion of Jael also."

"But not the opinion of Mrs. Van. The bird told me another thing, Conway."

"What was the other thing?"

"The bird hinted that all this would end in your marrying the widow of that poor wretch who destroyed himself."

"Johnny, my boy," said the artist, after a moment's silence, "if I give you a bit of advice, will you profit by it?"

"I'll try, if it's not disagreeable."

"Whether you profit by it, or whether you do not, keep it to yourself. I know the bird better than you do, and I strongly caution you to beware of the bird. The bird is a bird of prey, and altogether an unclean bird. The bird wants a mate and doesn't much care how she finds one. And the bird wants money, and doesn't much care how she gets it. The bird is a decidedly bad bird, and not at all fit to take the place of domestic hen in a decent farmyard. In plain English, Johnny, you'll find some day, if you go over too often to Porchester Terrace, either that you are going to marry the bird, or else that you are employing your cousin Toogood for your defence in an action for breach of promise, brought against you by that venerable old bird, the bird's mamma."

"If it's to be either, it will be the latter," said Johnny as he took up his hat to go away.

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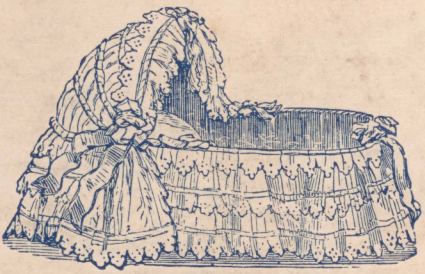

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